

DOCTOR WILLIAM TURNER OF NEW YORK.

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Holdens Dollar Mag. Jan. 1849.

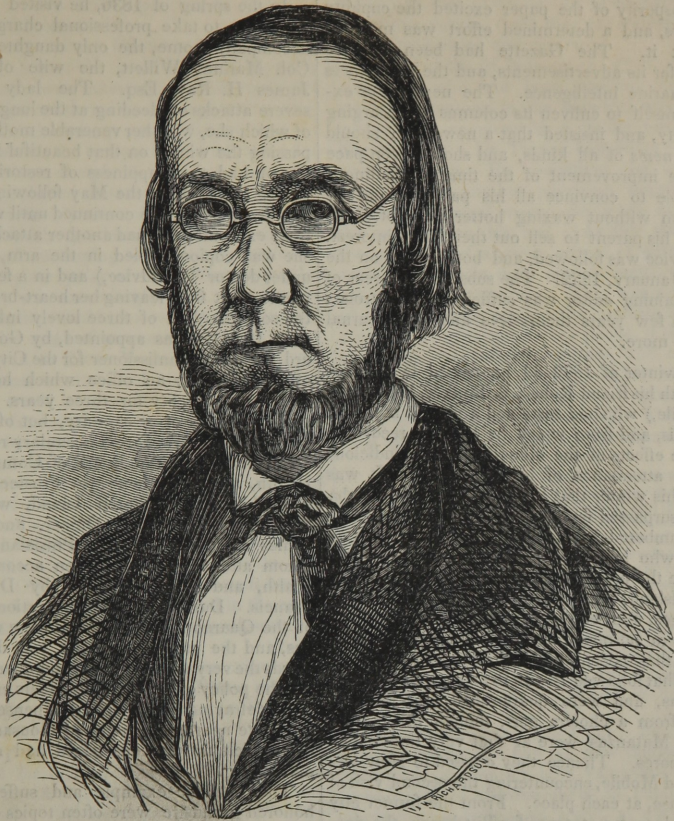
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DOCTOR WILLIAM TURNER,

OF NEW YORK.

DR. WILLIAM TURNER was born in the Second Ward of the City of New York, as were his grandfather and father before him. The latter, from whom he took his name and his independent spirit, had been attached to the British Navy; but becoming a Whig in the Revolution, he was punished for his daring by a long imprisonment in that most loathsome of all dungeons, the Jersey prison-ship in the Wallabout. The subject of this notice was educated in the City, and in 1821 he was graduated at Columbia College. He studied in the medical office of Dr. Samuel Borrowe, who then ranked among the heads of the profession, and occupied one of the houses in Broadway, now merged into the Mansion House of Mr. Bunker. Delighted with the branches of his studies, which involved botany, the nature and uses of the various medicines and remedial appliances, with anatomy and physiology, in the matter of practice he was perpetually encountering those stumbling blocks, viz: the general

ignorance which existed concerning the nature and cure of that large class of diseases, FEVER, and the alarming frequency with which the authors in repute directed the use of the lancet, the leech, and the cupping-instrument. It was in vain that he attempted to satisfy himself by counsels, and by meditating upon the confidence with which others acted in regard to them. Like the air-drawn dagger of Macbeth, whenever he attempted to reflect upon the necessity of following the example of others, the lancet would present itself before him, yet with no disposition on his part to "clutch" the blood-indicating phantom. For four years he was held vibrating between conflicting powers, the attraction of one portion of his studies, and the repulsion of the other. At last, the centrifugal force prevailed.

His father being one of the proprietors of the New York Gazette, then the first and most profitable commercial paper in the city at that time, conveyed to him an interest in the establishment,

and he became assistant editor, a post which he faithfully and assiduously filled for nine years. The prosperity of the paper excited the cupidity of others, and a determined effort was made to supplant it. The *Gazette* had been hitherto famous for its advertisements, and the correctness of its marine intelligence. The new editor exerted himself to enliven its columns by enlarging its variety, and insisted that a newspaper should contain *news* of all kinds, and should keep pace with the improvement of the times. Finding it impossible to convince all his partners, and the war from without waxing hotter and hotter, he advised his parent to sell out their joint interest. The advice was followed, and both retired on the first of January, 1832. The subsequent career of the remaining editor was sufficiently disastrous; and in a few years themselves and their journal were no more.

The winter of 1832-33, he passed in the Havana with his friend Robert S. Bunker, Esq., (now of Mobile,) who had sustained a violent attack of bronchitis, and from which he happily recovered from the effects of the climate, and the judicious medical attendance of his companion. It was during this winter that the cholera raged in Cuba with unsurpassed ferocity. In Havana, the deaths were numbered by hundreds a day. The two friends, who had passed through a siege of the epidemic the previous summer in New York and Rhode Island, remained unmoved in the midst of its ravages, and employed themselves in visiting the cholera hospitals, and in observing the little wisdom that existed, and the corresponding small success that followed it. In the spring they visited Matanzas, and were quarantined four days as coming from a cholera port, though the inhabitants of Matanzas were at that very time expiring by scores. Thence they crossed to New Orleans and Mobile, encountering the second visit of the disease, at each place. From the former city the friends took a steamer for Pittsburgh, the doctor attended by a train of alarmed cholera patients, who rejoiced at finding a doctor on board, and eagerly placed themselves under his charge. Not one of these died, and some of them were loud in grateful acknowledgement at his having saved their lives. Among the neglected steerage passengers, under the charge of the officers of the boat, there was not the same success—scarcely a night passing that several corpses were not quietly carried ashore, and buried in the darkness. It may be said then, of the doctor and his friend, if any body ever ran the gauntlet of the cholera, they did.

In the summer of 1833, the doctor repaired to Burlington, Vermont, and entered the office of Professor Benjamin Lincoln, one of the most accomplished and learned men the country ever produced. Having attended the course of medical lectures in the University of that City, and publicly defended his thesis upon Pulmonary consumption, at the concluding examination he received his diploma of M. D. He returned to New York in the fall, but confined his practice, as before, to his immediate friends and relations, and to the poor. The vision of the lancet, however,

still continued to haunt him, nor was his instinctive aversion to it in any degree diminished.

In the spring of 1836, he visited the island of St. Croix, to take professional charge of, and to accompany home, the only daughter of the late Col. Marinus Willett, the wife of his friend, James H. Ray, Esq. The lady having had severe attacks of bleeding at the lungs, on account of which she, with her venerable mother, had been passing the winter on that beautiful island. The doctor had the happiness of restoring Mrs. R. to her husband, in the May following, in perfect health; in which she continued until winter, when, from exposure, she had another attack. For this, she was copiously bled in the arm, (though not under doctor T.'s advice,) and in a few weeks her gentle spirit fled, leaving her heart-broken partner the sole guardian of three lovely infant children.

In 1840 he was appointed, by Governor Seward, Health Commissioner for the City and County of New York, an office which he discharged with great fidelity for three years. His duties were not only of a sanitary, but of a fiduciary character, involving great pecuniary responsibility. His colleagues in the Board of Commissioners of Health, who were then also Trustees in the Marine Hospital, at Staten Island, were Dr. A. Sidney Doane, Health Officer, and Dr. Wm. James Macneven, Resident Physician—the last of whom afterwards resigned on account of infirm health, and was superseded by Dr. John W. Francis. During this administration, the affairs of the Quarantine Department were very prosperous, and the utmost liberality was displayed towards the very unusually large number of patients; yet the policy of the Commissioners enabled them, after defraying many heavy expenses, to save to the State nearly one hundred thousand dollars, a feat which no previous board had succeeded in performing.

The patriotic example and sufferings of his honored grandsire were often topics of conversation in the doctor's family, and it is not surprising that his mind was influenced by the recital. Hence he was found to take an early interest in politics, conceiving it the duty of every citizen in a Government like ours so to do; the faithful performance of that duty being the best test of the republicanism of the individual. What but a "mere cumberer of the ground" is that republican who looks with indifference upon this first of obligations?

Scarcely three weeks had passed after the inauguration of General Harrison, as Chief Magistrate of the nation, on the 4th of March, 1841, when, from the effects of exposure to the rain on that day, and the reaction of repose after an exciting campaign, that distinguished man was taken down with a slight indisposition. It is not now denied that the depletory treatment of his physicians, (by leeches and cupping) aggravated his disorders, under which he rapidly sunk, and on the seventh day expired, leaving the government in the hands of Vice President Tyler, whose defection from his party effected an entire change in the policy of the nation. The effect of this revolution, thus began by a few leeches, successively pervaded most of the States; and in 1843, when

New York had taken her share in the change, Doctor T. gave place to an officer of opposite politics, and retired from a position he had held with honor and respect.

In the summer of the following year, the Hon. Willis Hall, then at the head of the Whig party in New York, was taken slightly ill, early one morning, at his residence in Albany, with a tingling in one cheek and one arm. By the time the physician arrived, the symptoms had left him; but the doctor was a disciple of rules and forms, and these, in his opinion, dictated bleeding. The demands of science (?) were of course submitted to, but the honorable gentleman fainted during the operation, and on coming to himself it was found, he had complete palsy of the entire left side! His recovery was exceedingly slow. At the end of three months, unable to walk a step, he was carried in the arms of servants to the steamboat, and conveyed to New York. Here, under the chrono-thermal treatment of his friend, Dr. Turner, in one week he was able to walk about his room, with the aid of a stick. In December, accompanied by the doctor, Mr. Hall sailed for the Havana, and the two passed the winter together on a beautiful coffee plantation, in the interior of the island of Cuba. The mild climate and the excellent medical treatment proved of the greatest service to the eminent invalid, who returned in the spring, by the way of New Orleans and the Mississippi and Ohio rivers—was afterwards happily married, and has been since engaged in the prosecution of that active and exciting profession, the law.

Thus the doctor had made three trips to the West Indies with patients, in each case returning his patient in a recovered condition, a distinction rarely witnessed.

It was in the summer of 1841, that an event occurred of the highest interest to the subject of this memoir. A copy of Dr. Dickson's "Fallacies of the Faculty, with the chrono-thermal system of medicine," accidentally fell into his hands. "He read it," as he tells us, "with delight, and a strong conviction of its truth." And well he might, for it contains a demonstration, strictly mathematical, that the lancet, he so instinctively abhorred, was not only useless in medicine, but was the most certain means of aggravating all diseases, whether chronic or acute. Such, however, was not the conviction of the Faculty in general, when, four years afterwards, after close study and extensive experiment, he gave to the American public an edition of the work with an introduction and notes, by himself. "Curses, not loud, but deep," at the unanswerable nature of the exposures, were hissed at him from every side. All the intrigues and acts that malice and baffled rage could engender, were put into operation against him. A festive society, which had elected him one of their physicians, without any reference to his medical opinions, was used by his enemies, without its knowledge, as an instrument of vengeance. At its next anniversary, a larger force of shown up doctors attended, and, under the protection of the secret ballot, ejected him from an office merely honorary. What better proof of the strength of his position? Unable to assail him

openly, the only resort left was to stab him in the dark. But even this failed. So evident was the conspiracy, that to this day the honorable members of the association, (and they are numerous) refer to it with derision and contempt.

On the 14th of November, 1846, Dr. Wm. Anderson, who had been medical professor in several institutions in the country, was suddenly taken with apoplexy in a public restaurant in Nassau street. Dr. Turner, happening to pass by, was called in. He prohibited the use of the lancet, which another physician suggested; but by chrono-thermal means, he in ten minutes put the professor on his feet. As this was done in the presence of a great crowd of persons, who could not restrain their astonishment, the affair got into the newspapers. This was a new cause of offence on the part of the profession. But in a matter so important to the public, it was necessary to be exceedingly cautious, and to emulate the prudence of the serpent. After a consultation of three weeks, however, a plan was hit upon, notable for its insidiousness. The following card appeared in the *Courier and Enquirer*:

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 8, 1846.

The subscribers request the regular practitioners of this city to meet on Saturday next, December 12th inst., 1 P. M., at the Lyceum of Natural History, 561 Broadway. The design of this call is to ask the co-operation of our medical brethren in an undertaking intended to elevate the character of our profession—to advance its interests and to increase its usefulness by furnishing facilities for social intercourse—promoting harmony amongst its members and means of mutual improvement. In the prosecution of this object it is proposed to establish an academy of medicine and surgery and to provide a permanent place for its meetings.

VALENTINE MOTT,
ALEX. H. STEVENS,
ISAAC WOOD.

The scheme was carried out. Its design was to place under the ban all new things and their advocates, no matter how valuable—but to take care never to canvass them in public. But as contrivances sometimes recoil, as the constructor of the guillotine was its first victim, so Dr. Mott came near realizing a like fate:

"As guns when aimed at ducks or plover
Recoil and kick their owner over."

Dr. M. had performed a very successful surgical operation. But he had the indiscretion to employ the inhalation of ether, so useful in subduing pain, but at that time a novelty. He was bitterly arraigned for this departure from the established *regime*, but a timely and abject supplication for forgiveness saved him from the utmost penalty of his own enactment.

It is needless to say that Dr. Turner was not sufficiently "green" to apply for admission into a self-constituted affair, thus hostilely organized. It happened, however, that a medical friend of his had his name presented for membership. This friend, some years before, not having the fear of the Academy before his eyes, for it did not then exist, had dedicated to Dr. T., in complimentary language, a medical work of great value. Since Dr. Turner could not be blackballed directly, it was thought to be a good chance to do so indirectly through his friend. Accordingly the cool proposition was made to the latter, that if he would publish

another edition of his book, cancelling the dedication, he should be admitted. The base proposal was indignantly spurned. And the Academy, as the lawyers say, "took nothing by its motion."

In the spring of 1847, Dr. Turner appeared with his "Triumphs of Young Physic, or Chrono-Thermal Facts," a little work designed simply to show what could be done by the new system; in which he was fortified by the testimony of people of the highest respectability in the country. This, of course, was only adding fuel to the envy and jealousy of his enemies, and brought down upon him, as its consequence, another rich harvest of abuse from the medical magazines and reviews.

In the summer of 1848, the first edition of the "Fallacies of the Faculty" having been long out of market, the doctor presented the public with a stereotyped edition from the Fifth London Edition, containing all the new matter of the author, and a second preface and other matter by himself. This has been remarkably well received by the

journals and the periodicals—many of which have been quite lavish in their encomiums upon it.

In 1845, Dr. Turner was married to Miss Ogden, daughter of Samuel G. Ogden, formerly an eminent merchant of New York, and well known in its history as prominent in the famous Miranda expedition.

Dr. Turner is in the forty-seventh year of his age, of the middle height, well made, and of a very agreeable and intelligent countenance. He is engaged in a lucrative and growing practice. Of a smooth and even temperament, the machinations of his adversaries are surveyed unmoved, and his aspect preserves its equanimity "calm as a summer morning" amid their most rancorous assaults.

"As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

A MIRROR FOR AUTHORS.

IN WHICH THEY MAY SEE VARIOUS REFLECTIONS REFLECTED, ECCENTRICITIES DI-VERSIFIED,
AND WEAK POINTS BLUNTLY EXPOSED.

BY MOTLEY MANNERS, ESQ.

O THOU who whilom with unsparing jibe
And scorching satire, lashed the scribbling tribe,—
Thou who on Roman pimp and parasite
Didst pour the vials of thy righteous spite,
Imperial Horace! let thy task be mine—
Let truth and justice sanctify my line!

And thou, relentless Draco of the schools,
Whose laws were scored upon the backs of fools,—
Thou bi-tongued genius from whose magic lips
Poison for knaves—for good men honey drips—
Thou poet-Lacon, withering with a verb,
And reining folly with a figure's curb,—
Thou of the Dunciad! animate my strain,
For vain my task if 'tis not in thy vein!

As in some butcher's barricaded stall,
A thousand prisoned rats gnaw, squeak, and crawl,
While, at the entrance, held by stalwart hands,
A panting terrier strives to burst his bands,—
With eyes inflamed and glittering teeth displayed,
Half turns to bite the hand by which he's stayed,
So writhes and pants my terrier muse, to chase
The rats of letters from Creation's face.

Far scurvier vermin these—my biped game—
Rats gnaw but books—these gnaw the author's fame—
Holding Parnassus as a mammoth cheese,
Which, climbing not, they nibble as they please,
And plying tooth and claw so fast and well,
That the whole mount is like a hollow shell.

Pharaoh was plagued with locusts for his crimes—
Happy was Pharaoh to escape our times,
When myriad insects, plumed with pens of steel,
Buzz like some thrifty housewife's ceaseless wheel,
Buzz, but beyond the buzz, all likeness dwindles,
Save that their brains are *warps*—their legs the *spindles*.

Down, terrier, down! we'll drop the canine form,
And incarnate the buzzing insect swarm.
Let us invoke the **BARDS**!—as once in Wales
King Edward did—from mountains, swamps, and vales,

Convened them all—then broke each harp and head—
(Would that our bards had such a wise king Ned!)
Let us invoke them, and as up they spring,
Shoot them as boys shoot crows, upon the wing:
Then shall their death-songs poetize the blast—
Like dying swan-notes, sweet, because the last.

But whom to pounce on first—O, vengeful muse—
Faith! they're so near alike 'tis hard to choose;
A stereotyped and ancient form they bear,
Like sheepskin small-clothes of a century's wear—
Gray are they, yet chameleon-like, still *green*,
Blue oftentimes, but seldom *re(a)d*, I ween:
Jack Ketch, when felons are about to die,
Divides their garments, but so will not I—
Though rainbow hued, like Joseph's coat, their dress,
Should all exchange, could scarce fit each one less;
Each eyes his fellow's garb with crafty glare,—
Some well-known patch he recognises there—
Some button stolen where he stole his own,
Some diamond brooch, with ostentation shown,
Which he will swear is paste, and in a trice,
Prove that he bought one like it, at half-price.
Motley and mean in truth these handgolds be—
A scurvieset ne'er marched through Coventry;
And what inflames mine anger as I gaze,
His stolen shreds each knave with pride displays:
This one wears breeches that might make his shroud—
This in a child's cap his huge head would crowd—
This dabbles daintily with French *fabricue*,—
This wears a helmet o'er his visage sleek:
All stolen, all misused and brought to waste—
Gods! if they *must* thieves—why not *thieve* with taste?

Pause, gentle muse, and bend with muscles pliant
To our acknowledged Paixhan, Mister Bryant
Bryant, the king of cis-atlantic gammon,
Apollo's proxy and chief clerk to Mammon!
My fingers tremble, and my pulse grows faint—
Awful the task a noonday sun to paint.
Fain would I praise this laureat of our nation,
Were not all praise but supererogation.

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